



AN ECCLESIOLOGICAL POSITION PAPER

For Orthodox Opposed to the
Panheresy of Ecumenism¹

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Translated from the Greek by Archbishop Chrysostomos of Etna

The Church and Heresy. We believe in “One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.”² “The Church in the Heavens and that on earth” are “one,”³ “even if the latter is designated according to different localities,”⁴ as, for example, the Churches of “Galatia,”⁵ the Church in “Ephesus,”⁶ or the “Church of Greece.” There is “one Lord” of the Orthodox Church, our Lord Jesus Christ. There is “one Faith” in the Church, the Orthodoxy of the

¹ This position paper, composed in 1984 by Metropolitan Cyprian and the Fathers of the Holy Monastery of Sts. Cyprian and Justina, is perhaps the most articulate contemporary ecclesiological document issued by any Old Calendarist group in Greece. Its general tone and the trenchant use of Patristic and Church historical sources are elements which commend it to a general Orthodox audience. Its appealing and reasonable arguments have met with general approval in Greece, both among Old and New Calendarists of moderate inclinations.

² The Symbol of the Faith.

³ The Acts and Pronouncements of the First Ecumenical Synod, *PM*, 2, 889.

⁴ St. Basil the Great, *PG*, 32, 629.

⁵ Gal. 1: 2.

⁶ Rev. 2:1.

God-inspired Apostles, the Holy Ecumenical Synods, and the God-bearing Fathers. There is but one “Baptism”⁷ unto salvation, that of Orthodox Baptism “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”⁸

The Orthodox Church as a whole is unerring and invincible: “And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,”⁹ says the Lord, the Ruler of All. It is possible, however, for Christians and for local Churches to fall in faith; that is to say, it is possible for them to suffer spiritually and for one to see a certain “siege of illness within the body of the Church,” as St. John Chrysostomos says.¹⁰ It is possible for Christians to separate and for “divisions” to appear within the Church, as the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians.¹¹ It is possible for local Churches to fall into heresy, as occurred in the ancient Orthodox Church of the West, which fell into the heresies of Papism and Protestantism and finally into the panheresy of ecumenism.

Spiritual maladies within the Church are cured either by repentance or by judgment. Until the judgment or expulsion of a heretic, schismatic, or sinner—either by the Church or, in a more direct manner, by the Lord—the opinion of a believer cannot be a substitute for the sentence of the Church and of her Lord, Jesus Christ, even if the resolution of a situation be prolonged until the Second Coming. As is well known, in the Scriptures, the Church is likened to a field replete with “wheat” and “tares,”¹² in accordance with Divine and ecclesiastical economy. Sinners and those who err in correctly understanding the Faith, yet who have not been sentenced by ecclesiastical action,

⁷ Eph. 4:5.

⁸ St. Mt. 28:19.

⁹ St. Mt. 16:18.

¹⁰ St. John Chrysostomos, *PG*, 48, 844.

¹¹ 1 Cor. 1:10–14.

¹² St. Mt. 13:20–30.

are simply considered ailing members of the Church. The Mysteries of these unsentenced members are valid as such, according to the Seventh Ecumenical Synod, as, for example, the President of the Synod, St. Tarasios, remarks: “[their] Ordination” “is from God.”¹³ By contrast, should expositors of heresy punish the Orthodox opposed to them, these punishments are ecclesiastically invalid and groundless “from the time their preaching began” (i.e., from the moment they began preaching heresy), as St. Celestine of Rome wrote and as the Third Ecumenical Synod agreed.¹⁴

Those in Opposition and Union. Orthodox Christians have an evangelical and canonical right to wall themselves off: that is to say, to break ecclesiastical communion with and commemoration of a Bishop who preaches “heresy” “publicly” “and bare-headed in the Church,”¹⁵ or who is blameworthy, in that he errs unrepentantly “in point of piety and righteousness,” as the Thirty-First Apostolic Canon states¹⁶—namely, when the Bishop acts “contrary to duty and justice,” as Zonaras the canon lawyer explains.¹⁷ If a Bishop or clergyman is “evil” “with regard to the Faith, leave and abandon him, not only if he be a man, but even if he be an angel come down from heaven,” says St. John Chrysostomos.¹⁸

Those Orthodox who have canonically separated themselves in this way, in keeping with the holy canons, are not subject to “canonical punishment,” but are even worthy of ecclesiastical “honor” “befitting those of right belief.” They are honored as worthy Orthodox since “they have not sundered the union of the

¹³ Acts of the Seventh Ecumenical Synod, *PM*, 12, 1042.

¹⁴ St. Celestine of Rome, *PM*, 4, 1045.

¹⁵ Fifteenth Canon of the First-and-Second Synod.

¹⁶ Thirty-First Apostolic Canon.

¹⁷ Zonaras, S.K., 2, 40.

¹⁸ St. John Chrysostomos, *PG*, 63, 231.

Church with any schism, but, on the contrary, have been sedulous to rescue the Church from schisms and divisions.”¹⁹ That is, “they have caused no schism in the Church on account of their separation, but have rather freed the Church from the schism [of her pseudo-Bishops],” Zonaras again observes.²⁰ He who preaches heresy or he who brings innovation into the Church divides her and abrogates her oneness or unity. He who opposes the preaching of heresy, or who separates himself from it, is eager to save the oneness or unity of the Church. The aim of opposition and separation is the combatting of heresy, the defense of the Orthodox Faith, and the preservation of the unity of the Orthodox Church, indeed of Orthodoxy itself.

The Division in the Church over Ecumenism. Today, the Church of Greece is, unfortunately, divided and ailing. In the year 1924, dark powers divided her through the thirteen-day innovation in the festal calendar. This innovation resembles the innovation of the iconoclastic heresy. The iconoclastic heresy raged in its desire to abolish the sacred Icons. However, it was related not “only to the veneration of Icons, but, more broadly, was a religious and ecclesiastical reformation.”²¹ It was, truly, a “transmutation of all things into ungodliness,” as St. Theodore the Studite characterized it.²² Yet the current innovation in the festal calendar is presented as an innocent chronological change. It is, however, for us the inception and clear manifestation of ecumenism. This change is not simply part of an extensive religious and ecclesiastical reformation, but it is one with ecumenism, which aspires to the assimilation of Orthodox by heretics and the submission of Orthodoxy to the Papacy. It embodies the “overturning of all things, even to [the spirit of] Antichrist,”²³ as St. Theodore

¹⁹ Fifteenth Canon of the First-and-Second Synod.

²⁰ Zonaras, S.K., 2, 694.

²¹ B. Stephanidou, *Ecclesiastical History* [in Greek], Athens, 1970, p. 256.

²² St. Theodore the Studite, *PG*, 99, 1164.

²³ *Ibid.*, 1025.

writes again regarding the Moechian²⁴ controversy, which, like the heresy of ecumenism, abolished the law of God.

With regard to the innovation in the festal calendar, Orthodox are divided into two parts: into those who are ailing in Faith and those who are healthy, into innovators and opposers—into followers of innovation, whether in knowledge or in ignorance, and those opposed, who have separated themselves from heresy, in favor of Orthodoxy. The latter are strugglers for oneness among the “divided,” as the Seventh Ecumenical Synod²⁵ calls those who so separated for the Orthodox unity of the Church. The followers of the festal calendar innovation have not yet been specifically judged in a Pan-Orthodox fashion, as provided for by the Orthodox Church. As St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain writes, the violator of established precepts is considered sentenced, insofar as he is judged by “the second entity (which is the council or synod).”²⁶ Since 1924, the innovators have been awaiting judgment and shall be judged on the basis of the decisions of the holy Synods, both Ecumenical and local, and, to be sure, on the basis of the ecclesiastical pronouncements of the sixteenth century against what were then Papal proposals for changes in the festal calendar. In this respect, those who have walled themselves off from the innovators have actually broken communion “before [a] conciliar or synodal verdict,” as is allowed in the Fifteenth Canon of the First-and-Second Synod.²⁷ That is to say, the innovators are still unsentenced. Consequently, their Mysteries are valid, the punishments perchance imposed by them against those in opposition are invalid and groundless, and their repentance and restoration to Orthodoxy are easy, should they wish this blessed return.

²⁴ A theological and political dispute involving Emperor Constantine VI and his divorce and remarriage to his mother’s lady-in-waiting. St. Theodore the Studite vehemently opposed the Emperor’s remarriage as adulterous and illicit by Church law.

²⁵ Letter of the Seventh Ecumenical Synod, *PM*, 13, 408.

²⁶ St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain, *The Rudder* [in Greek], p. 19 [5].

²⁷ Fifteenth Canon of the First-and-Second Synod.

Repentance and Return. Every innovationist member of the divided Greek Church is capable of changing over to opposition against the Ecumenist innovation. This can be accomplished through repentance, as has always taken place in Orthodoxy. In the Acts of the Fourth Ecumenical Synod, we read that certain Bishops proclaimed: “We have all sinned; we all ask forgiveness.” “And having stood up, the revered Bishop Juvenal, along with the others, went over to the other side,” that is, to the side of the Orthodox. “And the Easterners, along with their pious Bishops, cried out, ‘Welcome, Orthodox, God has rightly brought you.’”²⁸ Hence, they were received through their repentance and by their having approached the Orthodox. We see a similar manner of return in the Sixth Ecumenical Synod. St. Tarasios, President of the Seventh Ecumenical Synod, tells us that the “majority” of the Fathers of the Sixth Ecumenical Synod “had been Consecrated” by heretics—indeed, by “the leaders of the monothelitic heresy.”²⁹ However, by their having approached [the Synod] they were enrolled in Orthodoxy.

A return to Orthodoxy can also take place through a formal renunciation of heresy. St. Meletios of Antioch was Consecrated by heretics—the so-called “new heretics,” since they had not yet come to trial.³⁰ Since, however, he supported Orthodoxy in his address at his enthronement, he was considered the leader of the Orthodox of Antioch and later became the President of the Second Ecumenical Synod. Thus he was received into Orthodoxy by confession and by preaching the Orthodox Faith. The same also occurred later. The Seventh Ecumenical Synod invoked a pertinent passage “from the life of our Holy Father Sabbas.” In this passage, it is related that the monastic leaders St. Sabbas and

²⁸ Seventh Synod, *op. cit.*, 1034.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1047.

³⁰ St. Epiphanius of Cyprus, *PG*, 42, 429.

St. Theodore, along with the monastics under them, entered into communion with Archbishop John III of Jerusalem—who had previously been in agreement with the arch-heretic Severos—, after the Archbishop verbally renounced the latter’s heresy.³¹ And at the same Synod, the chief representative of the heresy of iconoclasm, Gregory of Neocæsarea, was received as a member of the synod through an examination of his corrected opinions and previous libel and by his renunciation of this great heresy.³²

Therefore, the Orthodox Tradition of the Holy Ecumenical Synods and of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church prescribes that that part of the divided Greek Church that is ailing in Faith be received by one of the foregoing means of repentance and returned to the ranks of Orthodoxy. For they are not condemned schismatic or heretical Christians, but members of the Church who have not yet been brought to trial. The working-out of this blessed repentance and immediate or gradual return belongs, of course, to the pious judgment of the Orthodox Bishop whose acts are in keeping with the Divine, or to a spiritual child appointed by him. The Faithful are obliged to receive these God-pleasing acts of economy by the Shepherds of God as a process for the perfecting of sinners, in accord with the Will of Christ our Savior, “who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”³³ And we also have the divine commandment, which tells us: “Him that is weak in the Faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.”³⁴ “Every one of you,” writes St. Ignatios the God-Bearer, “follow” the Orthodox Bishop and the Presbyters. For “whatever he should approve,” this “is pleasing to God also.”³⁵

³¹ Seventh Synod, *op. cit.*, 1042–1046.

³² *Ibid.*, 1115–1119.

³³ 1 Tim. 2:4.

³⁴ Rom. 14:1.

³⁵ St. Ignatios the God-Bearer, *Bepes*, 2, 281 [*Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, 8].

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Towards a Unifying Synod. Obviously, insofar as the Greek Church is divided today, the Holy Synod of the united Greek Church, as it was before the innovation of 1924, cannot be convened. As has always happened in the Orthodox Church, the convocation of this Synod will be made possible only when those who are divided are united in Orthodoxy.

During the reign of the iconoclastic innovation, for example, it was impossible for an Orthodox Synod of the entire Church to be convened. For this reason, such a Synod was convened when the iconoclastic heresy was no longer in power, that is, in 787, as the Seventh Ecumenical Synod of union. The same Seventh Ecumenical Synod writes through its Fathers that the Synod took place “so that we might change the discord of controversy into concord, that the dividing wall of enmity might be removed and that the original rulings of the Catholic [Orthodox] Church might be validated.”³⁶ That is, it was convened so that the differing factions of the Church, divided up to the time of the Synod—the Iconoclasts disagreeing with the Orthodox belief and the Orthodox opposed to the iconoclastic heresy—, might be united by means of an agreement within Orthodoxy.

According to the teachings of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church, the “Holy Synod of the Church of Greece” is not the Synod of the united Greek Church. This is a Synod in ecclesiastical discord and marked by innovation. Her acts and decisions with regard to the changing of the festal calendar and Papal heresy—or, more generally, the heresy of ecumenism—place her, assuredly, in the category of the more ancient, heresy-befriending or heretical councils that were convened before the Ecumenical Synods, as, for example, the iconoclastic council of 754, convened on behalf of the innovation of the iconoclastic heresy,³⁷ and condemned by the Seventh Ecumenical Synod.

³⁶ Letter, *op. cit.*, 408.

³⁷ Seventh Synod, *op. cit.*, 397.

But neither do the Holy Synods of the opposers of innovations in the festal calendar and ecumenism constitute the Synod of the united Orthodox Church of Greece. In agreement with evangelical and canonical law and the teachings of the Holy Fathers, the walling-off and the struggle against heresy, by the Orthodox in opposition to these things, are aimed at saving the unity of the Church's Faith and at the union of the divided Greek Church through a unifying Synod. As it has been said, such "have not sundered the union of the Church with any schism, but, on the contrary, have been sedulous to rescue the Church from schisms and divisions."³⁸ Insofar, then, as a unifying Synod is sought for and takes place in the future, and the fight now is one of Orthodox objection, the existing Synods that stand in opposition to innovations represent the good fight for the Faith. That is, they should be considered groups and convocations of Bishops who have, in an Orthodox fashion, made objections, as opposers of heresy, on behalf of Orthodoxy and for the unity of the Church.

The Need for Orthodox Opposition. What is preeminently required, therefore, is not the administrative organization of those in opposition to innovation, as though they alone constituted the whole Greek Church, but rather the fight against heresy by Orthodox, as the Saints practiced and taught such in times past. "There is a need, then, for a great and lawful struggle," said St. Basil in a time that parallels our own.³⁹ Indeed, there is a need for a great struggle that conforms to evangelical and canonical law, to the acts of the Saints, and to legitimate state legislation.

Every unifying Ecumenical Synod of the Church was the fruit of the holy struggles of Orthodox who stood opposed to heresy. The first Ecumenical Synod came about especially as a result of the faithful struggles of St. Alexander of Alexandria and

³⁸ Fifteenth Canon of the First-and-Second Synod.

³⁹ St. Basil the Great, *PG*, 31, 1540.

St. Athanasios the Great. The Second Ecumenical Synod was the result of the particular struggles of Sts. Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian. The third Ecumenical Synod came forth from the special efforts of St. Cyril of Alexandria and St. Celestine of Rome. The Fourth and Fifth Ecumenical Synods grew forth from the efforts of Orthodox who did not rest, but who struggled for the Orthodox Faith “unto death.”⁴⁰ The Sixth Ecumenical Synod came forth from the special struggles of St. Maximos the Confessor and St. Sophronios of Jerusalem. The Seventh Ecumenical Synod was the outcome of the efforts of St. John of Damascus and other Saints.

Today, also, we will attain to a unifying Synod of the divided Greek Church by imitating the holy and heroic strugglers for Orthodoxy who have gone before us. This demands, then: Orthodoxy; a Patristic footing; that our protest be modelled on that of the Saints; collaboration among those putting forth opposition, that is, those rooted in the Orthodox Faith and in the love “of the truth,” as the Apostle Paul says;⁴¹ and a struggle against the change in the festal calendar and, more generally, ecumenism. The fight must be strong, lawful, and unto death. For, “be faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life,” says the Lord of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, our Lord Jesus Christ.⁴² □

⁴⁰ Rev. 2:10.

⁴¹ II Thes. 2:10.

⁴² Rev. 2:10.